

THE DEATH DEALER

Entry No. 107 in Our Prize Story Competition

By ROBERT BARR



THE hamlet of Barton-Simmel might have been taken for the capital of the Happy Valley. Commercially it was of no importance whatever, being not even a market village; but nestled cozily along the banks of the clear trout stream that flowed through the place from end to end, a constant delight to gentle fly-fishers. The High-st. of Barton-Simmel for the most part followed this stream between rose covered, thatched roof cottages on the one hand, and a long, low parapet wall on the other, on the stone coping of which an indolent man might sit and watch the trout, head against current, body motionless, with tail gently waving, as it lay near the wet jungle of feathery weeds over which flowed water lambent as air.

It seems unaccountable that this rural Eden should have been chosen as the scene of one of the strangest tragedies that had ever taken place in England; for Barton-Simmel was a village where heretofore nothing dramatic had ever happened.

After the aged rector, no man was more respected and liked than William Sanson, M. D., M. R. C. S. For more than thirty-five years he had been sole physician to that district. Rich and poor alike had been his well cared for patients. Although living in such a back-water of life, Dr. Sanson had not allowed himself to fall behind the progress of his age. When, at one of the country houses, he met socially some titled doctor from London, whose name was familiar everywhere, the celebrated man always found himself interested by Dr. Sanson, and returned to London with unwonted respect for the country practitioner. Dr. Sanson occupied a house of his own, whose ample garden ran down to the margin of the trout stream, which he loved. A venerable housekeeper looked after his needs in kindly, tyrannical fashion, and it seemed as if the evening of his life was to be placidly spent among a people whom he loved, and who loved him. It was not Dr. Sanson's academic acquirements alone that caused his great success as a physician. There was something almost apostolic about his ministrations. A beneficent personal magnetism radiated from the kindly man that, permeating the patient's consciousness, made illness seem absurd. The very touch of his soft and gentle fingers brought soothing relief, and his own cheery confidence somehow inoculated the invalid with a belief in recovery.

Some very young men, fresh from the schools, delighted with Barton-Simmel, thought that, as the district was so large, with but one physician, there was here an ideal opportunity for another, and so sat down to begin life in this ideal spot. To these young interlopers, as the village called them, no one was so kind as the man they had come to supplant. He was always the first to call on them, and the last to believe their case hopeless. But, though he spoke well of them, the inhabitants of Barton-Simmel would rather be ill under the care of William Sanson than recover through the efforts of a stranger, and one by one these young doctors faded away and became successful elsewhere.

AT last, however, came a man who did not leave. Dr. Richard Mizare was his name; and it was surmised that he did not lack private means, for he had taken the old Manor House that had stood so long vacant. The estate agent did not conceal the fact that he had let the Manor House for a term of seven years; so it was evident that Dr. Mizare had come to stay.

The rector was the first to call upon him, and, charitable as this good man was, he left the Manor House with an uneasy feeling of dislike for its new occupant. Mizare had received the clergyman coldly, but with the air of one who wishes to get a disagreeable necessity over and done with.

"I am glad you called," he said to the Rev. Mr. Johnson. "You considered it your duty to do so, and your visit enables me to make certain explanations that may save me from unnecessary friendliness in future. I have not come here in any sense as a competitor to Dr. Sanson, because the cases with which he is competent to deal I should not think of accepting. I know nothing of his qualifications; but I imagine that my science begins where his terminates. I am called in, not by the patient, or the patient's friends, but by his physician. When the ordinary practitioner reaches the end of his tether, then I take charge of a case, and do my best for it; sometimes failing, sometimes succeeding, but, first of all, sure of my fee. I shall be sent for several times a year to London, to Paris, or to Vienna, and each of these trips will net me money enough to enable me to live in



"In Spite of Your Sneaking and Spying, I Have Beaten You!"

this secluded district during the length of time for which I have taken the Manor House. I shall be absorbed in study, and wish to make no acquaintances. Toward your own profession my attitude is one of unbelief. You will therefore not be disappointed if you never see me at the parish church. I wish you good morning, Sir, and again tender you my thanks for this visit."

IN spite of the discouraging account of the newcomer that the rector gave to Dr. Sanson, the latter paid him his second call. The good doctor made a large allowance for the friendliness and partizanship of his friend the rector. Sanson knew better than perhaps anyone in the village what a close community they were, and what a slight chance any interloper could have of strict justice being accorded him at the beginning.

Surrounding the Manor House was the largest garden in the village, while behind it parklike grounds extended over the wooded hill. William Sanson's garden adjoined that of the Manor House, and there was a door in the wall between them; a door of which Dr. Sanson held the key, for by the agent's kindness he was permitted to wander as he would over the umbrageous pleasure. One of the newcomer's first demands from the agent was for this key, which of course included a withdrawal of the privilege Dr. Sanson had so long enjoyed, and was practically a declaration of desire for seclusion. With this desire the elder doctor entertained complete sympathy, and, ignoring the rector's dislike of the stranger, he resolved to meet him with a genial and open mind.

It was a glum looking man servant who admitted Dr.

Sanson to the old Manor House. He seemed at first to harbor some hesitation about doing so, and for a moment Sanson thought he was to be left standing on the doorstep, as the old servitor muttered that Dr. Mizare did not care to receive visitors. But few, high or low, could resist the winning smile of Dr. Sanson.

"Tell your master," he said, "that his confrère, Dr. Sanson, wishes to pay his respects to him, and is anxious to bid him welcome to Barton-Simmel."

At this the uncivil butler showed the old doctor into a square, well lighted room on the ground floor, designed to be partly a library, and perhaps partly a consulting room. The servant growled that he would tell Dr. Mizare of his arrival, and so the aged practitioner was left to his thoughts.

It was at this point that Dr. Mizare made his first and most irreparable mistake. Either to emphasize his servant's discourtesy, or to impress upon his visitor the idea that he was dealing with a great man, whose work was so important that the ordinary civilities of life could be ignored in its furtherance, he allowed his senior to remain alone fully three-quarters of an hour in that square room.

Dr. Sanson was not a man quick to take offense, and the continued absence of the individual he had come to see aroused no resentment in his kindly breast. He placed his hat upon a table nearby, and in doing so almost upset a small, clear glass bottle such as physicians use for preserving specimens in oil. Glad that he had not broken it, he took it in his hand, and, examining it with professional interest, found to his surprise that it

contained certain examples of an insect to which Sanson himself had devoted some study.

"Now why," said he to himself, "why is Dr. Mizare interested in this pest?"

There coming no answer to this query from the silence, Sanson placed the flask on the table again, and wandered indifferently to and fro, examining chiefly, as an intellectual person will, the small collection of books on the shelves against the wall. In a physician's library one expects heavy volumes on anatomy, on materia medica, on physiology, on chemistry, or on anyone of the divergent branches that spring from these themes; but to the veteran's astonishment he found this assemblage of books to consist entirely of tomes on entomology. He glanced from the little library against the wall to the bottle on the table, crossed over and picked it up again, scrutinizing its contents with knitted brow. The good doctor was puzzled. He sat down, and was thinking deeply when at last the door opened, and Mizare came in.

"I am sorry to have kept you waiting," he began, and the perfunctory tone in which he spoke robbed his words of any virtue an apology might possess. "To tell you the truth, Sir, my object in settling at Barton-Simmel was to take advantage of its seclusion in the furtherance of certain lines of scientific study which I make my specialty. I spoke with some plainness to your rector on the occasion of my visit to me, hoping that he might give currency to my determination not to be disturbed unnecessarily in my researches by social favors which I have no intention of either receiving or giving."

Dr. Sanson, a man slow in his movements, had not completely turned toward his reluctant host until this discourse, spoken in quick, crisp tones, had reached its conclusion.

"Barton-Simmel," he said, "is an excellent place for study, with the drawback that it is a little sleepy and relaxing; but when once you get—"

HERE he caught sight of the other's face, and his jaw dropped. He recoiled a step or two, in spite of himself. Where had he met this man before? When, in years past, had he seen this forbidding countenance? Why was it associated in his mind with a feeling of repugnance and horror? How came he instantly to know that, although the man was right in designating himself a physician, he lied when he said his name was Mizare?

"You are about to observe, perhaps, that when one becomes accustomed to the relaxing nature of the valley, there is then a possibility of good work being performed?" Mizare's tones were less staccato than they had been. Something almost resembling suavity crept into his sentence.

"Yes, that is what I was going to say," replied Dr. Sanson, recovering himself. "I beg your pardon for my momentary halt. An old man's wits go wool-gathering upon occasion. Where have I met you before, Dr. Mizare?"

"I am sure I don't know. If it was within the last ten years, our meeting may have taken place in Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Heidelberg, or Bonn."

"It is more than ten years since I visited any of the cities you name," replied Sanson.

"Then we may have met in Edinburgh. I hold a medical degree from the university of the Scottish capital."

"I am a London man myself," resumed his visitor, "and, although I have never had the advantage of studying abroad, I endeavor to keep myself in touch with foreign thought and progress, reading as I do French and German well enough for practical purposes. Do you hold diplomas from any of these centers of learning?"

"From all of them," said Mizare shortly.

"You are well equipped for a great career, and I fear you will soon seek a wider sphere of influence than Barton-Simmel can offer."

"As I told you, I came here for quiet and uninterrupted study. I shall not practise, either in Barton or elsewhere. It is my ambition to produce a work that will revolutionize the world, and to get on with it I fear I must be so disconcerted as to bid you good afternoon."

"Just one moment before I go, and I hope you will pardon a veteran's curiosity. I have never seen a foreign medical diploma. Would you mind showing me one of yours?"

Sanson doubtless thought he was very crafty in making this request; but he merely put the other on his guard. Mizare's eyes almost closed, and through the slits between the lids Sanson caught a glimpse of electric fire. The expression of malignancy was merely momentary. After a short silence Mizare said calmly:

"I shall be delighted to give you such proof as parchment affords that I possess the qualifications to which I have laid claim."

The younger man took from a drawer a bundle of documents that had not even been framed, but were wrapped together in a careless roll. He opened the parcel, selected three of the documents, and handed them to Dr. Sanson, watching him keenly as the old man examined them one by one.

Yes, the name "Richard Mizare" was written on each, in script, scroll, or ornamental lettering.

"Very interesting, very interesting indeed," muttered Sanson, plainly nonplussed.

A contemptuous smile curled the lip of the other. "I thought they would prove so," he commented sneeringly.

He had completely chagrined and discomfited Dr. Sanson, who, being a gentleman of the old school, recognized that in his certainty that Mizare was not the true name of his host he had overstepped the limits of courtesy in asking to see the certificates. He bade Mizare a confused farewell, and took his departure,

hearing the bolts shoved savagely into their places as the door was banged on his heels.

NEVER had William Sanson experienced such perturbation as during his walk from the Manor House to the rectory. Never had he felt such need of a confidential chat with his stanch friend the rector, and yet when he came almost opposite the rectory gate he stopped, like a man suddenly stricken to a standstill by an idea. Turning, he retraversed High-st. with long, steady strides, and entered his own house, where he went directly to his library.

One of his extravagances, regarding which he commuted with his conscience by calling it an office necessity, was a complete set of "The Illustrated London News," whose tall volumes occupied the bottom shelf nearly the whole length of the apartment. The library was also his waiting room, and a volume of "The Illustrated London News" had more than once quieted an impatient man for half an hour.

Ten years before Dr. Mizare had gone to Germany, if his own statement were true, and the inference to be drawn was that he had lived abroad ever since. Now, a man who has taken a good degree at Edinburgh may add a year or two of study on the Continent; but not ten years, unless something has happened to keep him away from his native country. It was this thought that brought to the doctor's mind like a flash of inspiration the fact that he had never before seen his new neighbor in the flesh, but had been struck by his portrait once in "The Illustrated London News." And now, if research was being prosecuted by one physician in the old Manor House, it also engrossed another physician in the house next door.

Volume after volume of "The Illustrated London News" was placed on the table, and at last with a gasp of recognition he came upon the portrait. John Kane, accused of the murder by poison of his relative, Robert Webster! There it was, page after page of text and illustrations, beginning with Robert Webster, an anemic youth of nineteen, who had stood between John Kane and an income of a thousand pounds a year. The case had lasted a week, and had thrilled England from end to end. The trial had been the talk at every village corner, in the houses of the rich and the hovels of the poor. It was the universal opinion that Dr. John Kane poisoned his cousin, and although he had brazened out the six days' trial with an iron nerve and coolness that never deserted him, his hardened manner and contemptuous retorts had forfeited even that mitigated sympathy often received by the alleged criminal in the dock. The chain of circumstantial evidence was unbroken, except in one link,—no trace of poison could be found in the body of the dead youth. The Judge held that the prosecution had failed, and practically he directed the jury to acquit the prisoner, who left the court amid a howl of execration, and immediately entered into the enjoyment of one thousand pounds a year.

With the big volume open before him, Dr. Sanson learned back in his chair, gazed at the ceiling, and meditated deeply. Why was Dr. John Kane a resident at Barton-Simmel under an assumed name? That question was answered by the open book before him. Dr. Kane had many reasons for hating the public and for avoiding recognition.

The next problem that arose in Sanson's mind was not so quickly disposed of. Should he tell what he knew of this unwelcome stranger, or should he keep the information to himself? The doctor finally determined upon the latter course. Kane had stood his public trial, and had been acquitted by a competent tribunal, at the close of a week's minute investigation of the case. He had therefore every right to regard the verdict as final, and it seemed to Sanson unjust now to resurrect this ghost against him.

RICHARD MIZARE was troubled by no more callers; but if Barton-Simmel left Dr. Mizare alone, the mysterious stranger did not return the compliment. He sprang on the quiet hamlet a scandal so absurd and so evidently malicious that it aroused the populace first to laughter, and then to burning indignation.

Dr. Mizare appeared early one day before the Squire with a black eye, and a head bound up, and, in an almost hysterical state of excitement, laid the information that the Manor House had been broken into during the small hours of the morning. The intruder was masked; but Dr. Mizare, according to his own account, hearing a noise downstairs, proceeded cautiously to reconnoiter, detected the burglar, dark lantern and all, and heroically closed with him. There was a struggle, in which Dr. Mizare came off second best. He received a blow on the head that nearly stunned him, and then was knocked down by the fist of the criminal; but in falling he tore the mask from the burglar's face, and he swore that the amateur crackman was no other than his next-door neighbor, Dr. William Sanson.

The stout and jovial Squire threw back his head and roared with laughter. "My dear sir," he said at last, "you show yourself indeed a stranger among us. I have no idea what valuables you conceal in the Manor House; but let me acquaint you, Sir, with the fact that old Dr. William does not need a jimmy to enter our houses. He is welcome at any hour of the night or day, and equally welcome to help himself to whatever he needs within our dwellings, be it gear or gold. Somebody has undoubtedly given you a nasty clout on the crown, which has scattered your wits. You surely do not expect me to issue an order for the arrest of William Sanson, whose upright character has been a model to us all this half century?"

"I expect you, Sir, as magistrate, to accept the information I lay before you, and to act upon it; not in accordance with your friendship for Sanson, but in accordance with the laws of the land."

"In accordance with the laws of the land?" returned the magistrate hotly. "I'll commit you for contempt if you dare address to me another such insulting remark. Take my advice, for which, unlike yourself, I charge no fee. Go to Dr. Sanson, and beg him to attend to your hurts."

"Do you, Sir, refuse to issue a warrant when I take the responsibility of charging Sanson on oath to be a burglar and attempted murderer?"

"Pooh!" cried the magistrate. "Of course I refuse. Go home and put a cold compress on your head, and see if you can revive whatever commonsense was formerly lodged there. If you persist, I'll write you an order quickly enough; but it will be one committing you to the county lunatic asylum."

Richard Mizare stood there enraged, but nonplussed, and, confident though he was of the justice of his case, he began to doubt the wisdom of pressing it to an issue against a man who stood so high in the esteem of his neighbors as did Dr. William Sanson. While he stood with bent head before the angry magistrate, a servant entered and wished to know if his Honor could receive Dr. Sanson.

CERTAINLY," said the magistrate. "Come along in, William!" he roared. "Even the humblest may approach the throne of British justice."

"The footstool, rather," replied Dr. Sanson, with a smile. "You know you're not really a Judge, but one of the great unpaid. Ah, Dr. Mizare, good morning! Have you met with an accident?"

"This man," snorted the magistrate, "has had his thinking apparatus damaged by a blow of some sort, and it would be only a neighborly turn, William, if you were to look after his headpiece."

Dr. Sanson benignly approached the wounded man, who stepped back a pace or two, clenching his fists, but feeling that somehow circumstances were too strong for him.

"Permit me," said the elder man aloud, intending to unloosen the bandage, while the other evidently determined to prevent him doing so; then in a whisper the magistrate could not overhear he added, "John Kane, you of all men should know that a charge may be true and yet cannot be proved in court."

The face of his accuser changed color to a pasty yellow. His alert mind showed him that William Sanson knew not only his secret of the present, but also his secret of the past.

The skilful fingers of the elder doctor removed the clotted bandage from the younger's head.

"Ah," he said, "a lucky escape! A little higher up, and the consequences might have been serious. I wish my arm possessed the vigor and youth of the one that struck this blow. It required a firm hand and a strong wrist. When did you receive it?" He deftly clipped away the matted hair with a pair of surgical scissors he had taken from his pocket.

"An hour before daylight this morning," snarled the victim.

"A burglar, then?"

"A burglar, evidently."

"Did he get away with anything?"

"Nothing tangible, Dr. Sanson."

There was silence between them while the doctor dressed the wound with sympathetic care.

"You will soon be all right again," said Sanson. "The blackened eye is decorative rather than dangerous, and it would be superfluous to tell so skilful a man as yourself how to treat it. I advise you to take it very easy for a few days."

"Thank you," said Mizare quietly; then, turning to the magistrate, he continued, "I fear, Sir, I was somewhat dazed and excited when I entered this room. I therefore apologize if I said anything to offend you."

"That's all right," replied the bluff magistrate. "Do you wish to make a charge against anyone?"

"Against no one, your Honor. My assailant was masked, and in any case probably does not belong to this neighborhood."

IT was a fortnight later that the tragedy occurred.

The face of Dr. Sanson became more and more haggard; for he knew time to be his greatest enemy. His preparations were all made, and he was on the watch practically night and day. The tension was fast wearing him down, and he feared a failure of strength when the climax came. He had determined to divide his task into two sections, the more certain thus to make it complete,—first the burning of the mansion; secondly, the assassination of Dr. Mizare.

These things must be accomplished almost simultaneously, and he so feared the craft and energy of Dr. Mizare that he dared not risk burning up the man in the house of which he was a tenant. Aware that Sanson knew his secret, Mizare was almost certain to suspect fire, and had doubtless provided means for extinguishing an outbreak. Also, since the attempted burglary, Mizare was sure to carry upon his person a loaded revolver, and one shot might end Dr. Sanson's project with his life. He knew it was useless to destroy the mansion if Mizare remained alive, and equally useless to kill Mizare if the mansion was standing intact beyond Friday morning.

It was at ten minutes to nine on the morning of Thursday that Dr. Sanson's opportunity came. He saw Mizare leave the Manor House by the front door, locking it behind him, and testing the fastenings with great care. Then he walked down the stone flagged path to High-st.

The Manor House was almost invisible from the road, standing as it did in grounds so thickly wooded. The moment Sanson heard the click of the front gate he seized a large basket filled with thick bundles of

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THE FIFTH DIMENSION

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slowly, with a labored effort, the doctor lifted his eyes and encountered the smile and gleaming teeth. He shrank back with a faint shudder. There was on a sideboard nearby a decanter and glasses. Still keeping his eyes on the face under the lamp, he drew farther away, and with hands that shook in spite of his trained nerves he poured out two glasses of wine and extended one to his strange guest. "Drink!" he whispered.

The other laughed silently. "Good! To the man we have reasssembled!" His head was thrown back and glass poised.

But the other glass slipped from the doctor's hand and clinked on the floor. His face took on a ghastly hue.

"What is that?" he said chokingly, pointing to a livid streak that almost encircled the neck of the man opposite. The other's hand went instinctively to his throat, and his chin sunk quickly into his collar.

"Alas!" he said. "It is a birthmark. My mother witnessed the death of my father in a railway wreck, and died bringing me into the world." He rose with sudden agitation and moved away. "After all, let us not drink! It is unphilosophical. If I have wearied you—"

"Who are you?" The doctor's question was a hoarse shout. He struck the table thrice in anger.

"Look at the diagram! You still miss the

largest 'coincidence.' Observe that all your stories, all your lives, form one great triangle. Who am I? I am that; for only in my consciousness did they record their true relations. I am—the fifth dimension!"

"Your name, Sir, your name!" Again the clenched hand struck the table. Suddenly it tore open his shirt at the throat. The dancing light cast fantastic shadows on the face framed in the doorway, and in them once more had flashed the strange smile and white teeth. Then—the frame was empty.

NO sound came back from the deserted street. The doctor, hesitating at every step, passed to the veranda and listened. As he stood there the whistle of a train floated to him across the city—or was it across the years? Inside, his study was undisturbed. Under the hooded lamp was a cigar, a glass of wine, and the diagram. As his eyes rested on the large triangle he seemed to see a pyramid with its burial chamber exposed; but in a flash, as from a faraway impression renewed, the symbol yielded a spiritual meaning—the growth of life without from life within, its boundaries shifting and enlarging as the generations arose. His eyes sought again the open door, and a strange peace enveloped him.

"I wonder—" he said.

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combustibles, saturated with paraffin, and on top of the lot a heavy hatchet. He opened the door in the party wall with the false key he had prepared, and smashed with his hatchet the first window he came to, lit one of the prepared bundles, and flung it inside. With incredible rapidity for a man so old, he did the same with each of the ten windows that ran along the two ends of the house and the back; then, dropping hatchet and basket, he came round to the front of the mansion and emerged on the high road.

Mizare was not in sight; so Sanson crossed the street, sat down on the low stone parapet that separated the road from the river, and waited, scanning the empty street, and casting anxious glances into the dense leafage of the Manor grounds. In the silence a crackling noise came to him, and once he thought he caught a flash of light in the deep green. Finally over the tops he saw a thin, smoky haze, and drew a deep breath of satisfaction. Once those timbers, drying through the centuries, got fairly alight, no appliances nearer than London could extinguish the conflagration.

The blue vapor above the trees increased in volume, and the doctor rose to his feet with a long sigh of content. Mizare had just emerged from the telegraph office, and had started westward toward him. Dr. Sanson's hands were in the side pockets of his morning jacket. He strolled in leisurely fashion to meet his antagonist.

As the two men approached, a bitter smile twisted the lips of Mizare.

"Good morning, Doctor," he said, coming to a standstill. "Do you know, in spite of your sneaking and spying, I think I have beaten you?"

Sanson's hands were still in the pockets of his jacket. "I do not agree with you, John Kane," he said.

"Ah, that John Kane discovery worked once, taking me as you did by surprise; but you can't play that trick a second time. You seem to forget that John Kane was acquitted, and stands as free of the law as you do. More so, indeed; for you are an unconvicted housebreaker."

"Yes, and worse than that, John Kane,—a still undetected incendiary."

"What do you mean by that?" cried Mizare, with a catch in his breath; but Sanson did not need to reply. Up the street a wild scream rent the air.

"Fire! Fire! Fire!" came the shouts.

"Burglar and incendiary!" cried Mizare, springing forward as the other retreated.

"Yes, and add 'assassin!'" cried Sanson, withdrawing his right hand from his pocket and firing pointblank at the oncoming madman. The bullet scarcely checked the onrush, and Sanson, stepping calmly backward, fired again. Mizare's arms flew up; he fell forward on his face, and lay writhing. Sanson looked backward over his shoulder. A dense cloud slashed with living crimson flames rose straight above the treetops in the still, sweet morning air. The street was rapidly filling with people.

Sanson stepped forward, placed the revol-

ver muzzle at the ear of the squirming man, and fired his third and final shot.

"Good God, Doctor!" cried the magistrate, panting and agast. "If I had not seen you do it—Great Heavens! Even now I cannot believe my eyes!"

"It is true, David, nevertheless. Tell them they cannot save the Manor House, and urge them not to try. There is no wind, and even the nearest houses are safe. It's a pity about the old Manor House, with its beautiful architecture."

"Oh, Doctor, Doctor!" groaned the horrified magistrate.

"Tell the Chief of Police when he comes, David, that he will find me in my library," and with that the old doctor turned. And so potent is the effect of a reputation that no man tried to intercept him—and it was not the smoking pistol that held them back.

THE Chief of Police found the doctor seated at the library table. The gray head was laid upon the open pages of "The Illustrated London News" that contained the pictures of the trial of John Kane. The doctor had drunk prussic acid, and was dead.

Here follows the statement that he wrote for the information of the Coroner's Jury:

"These words will be read aloud to a number of men who have known me, by my old friend, the Coroner, with whom I deeply sympathize in the gruesome task before him. It is possible that if I had lived I might have been acquitted by a jury of my countrymen for the killing of Dr. Richard Mizare, whose real name was John Kane, a man tried ten years ago for the murder of his cousin, whose heir he was. In the ten years that have elapsed since that trial, I imagine that John Kane's mind became embittered at the whole human race, and that he set about deliberately to eliminate from the world every living creature on its surface.

"For some purpose inscrutable to us who believe in the justice and mercy of God, He created an insect so prolific and so fatal to all vegetable life that the continued existence of every other living thing upon the earth depends on the increase of this insect being kept within bounds. Providence, having created the danger, established the antidote that has hitherto proved effective; for the insect is in turn destroyed by other insects.

"I am endeavoring to write a plain statement, and so avoid all technical and scientific nomenclature; but the name of aphids, those little green flies with whose destructive work everyone who cultivates a garden is familiar, is well known.

"During my first and only confessed visit to John Kane, my suspicion became aroused, and I devoted my time to watching him. Overwhelming as was the issue, I dared not take the life of a human creature on suspicion alone. At two o'clock one morning I broke into the Manor House clumsily, but silently, and, traversing most of the many rooms in that large building, found each of them a propagating chamber for the aphids. When I state that a single pair of aphids will reproduce themselves with such rapidity that

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ICE

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within the space of a few days the number of their descendants will run into millions, it will be seen that this man was engaged in overturning the balance of Nature, and I compute that with all the rooms in the Manor House active volcanoes, vomiting out this appalling living plague, it is just possible that I have already delayed too long in doing what I did. I pray this may not be the case.

"Having illegally taken human life, I consider it better to condemn and to execute myself than to blazon these facts abroad in a trial that was bound to become famous. In conclusion, I may say that the aphid is not in itself dangerous to human life. It is a voracious consumer of every green plant, and, once it got the upper hand, all vegetation would disappear. Knowing the havoc caused by a flight of locusts, and the starvation following their ravages, one may picture the state of the world with these insects con-

suming every vegetable product on its surface, and each reproducing millions of others like itself. Within a very short time there would not be left on earth any green vegetable, from the smallest blade of grass to the largest forest tree. A few weeks more, and through starvation all animal life on this planet would have ceased to exist.

"(Signed) WILLIAM SANSON."

THE Coroner, who read this document in a voice that was continually escaping from his control, wiped his eyes as he laid it down.

"Poor old Sanson!" he said. "Is it possible that such a tiny insect could do the harm he feared?"

But the men of the jury raised no such doubt. To them the wisdom and justice of Dr. Sanson, in death as in life, remained unquestioned.

THE BENEVOLENT SECRETARY

BY SMITH D. FRY

IN reminiscent vein an old former employee of the War Department narrates a story of a Secretary of War, a true story of unusual kindness.

Seldom does a member of the Cabinet see or know anything concerning the personnel of the department; nor does he have the time to look into the rights and wrongs of the subordinate individuals who carry on the clerical work.

Once a clerk was assigned to the Adjutant General's office, where he proved to be an efficient and gentlemanly worker, a man of unusual refinement. He made friends of all who came his way, and his immediate superiors were glad to have such a man in the service.

To the surprise of everyone there came from the Adjutant General an order dismissing this clerk. The chief clerk learned that the Adjutant General had discovered that the clerk had formerly been employed in the service, and had been convicted of secreting, purloining, and destroying official papers. There was no doubt about it, because there were two old employees of the office who recognized the man and informed the Adjutant General about his past.

The order of dismissal, with many other papers, was laid on the desk of the Secretary of War. He carefully examined all papers that came before him, and when he read that discharge order, he asked, "Is this clerk a married man? Has he a wife? Has he children? Is this discharge absolutely necessary?"

The Secretary was informed that the man had a wife, three children, and a mother depending upon him for support, also that he had been a soldier in the Union army, and a brave one; but that his one official misdeed made him undesirable as a clerk, and that the Adjutant General required his immediate dismissal.

"This is the ninth of December," mused the Secretary. "I wonder if it has occurred to the Adjutant General that Christmas comes on the twenty-fifth of this month. If I sign this order, there will be a gloomy Christmas at his home. There may be no presents for the children, and there may be no glad Christmas dinner, no Christmas tree, no Santa Claus, no merriment, and in his family there will be no semblance of the coming of the Christ with 'Peace on earth.'"

"Moreover, I see," continued the Secretary, "that fourteen years have elapsed since this misdeed was done. In the meantime, as the record shows, this man has been living honestly, acquired the esteem of those who recommended him for appointment, and has entered the state of matrimony and become a father. Cannot a man live down a fault, or a misdeed, or a crime, in this land of Christianity? I cannot sign this order which will send him out into the world without any income, and again blackening his reputation, after all these years of endeavor to redeem the past by right living. I cannot do it, and remain on speaking terms with myself, during this Christmas tide!"

On the following morning, when informed that the Secretary had declined to sign the order, the Adjutant General called upon him and discussed the case officially, with the result that he convinced the Secretary that unless the clerk should be dismissed there could not be maintained that high order of efficiency and discipline for which the office had always been distinguished.

The Secretary finally asked that the clerk be sent to him. The unfortunate man was received with great courtesy, and asked to narrate his story.

The man told the story of his fourteen

years of endeavor to live down the misdeed, the commission of which he admitted. He begged the Secretary to save from the disgrace and ruin that must follow his discharge.

"The newspapers will print this story all over the land," he cried, "and I shall be utterly ruined; for I cannot again secure employment. My wife and children do not know that I have ever been other than the one they have known. Even my dear old mother is ignorant of the wrongdoing of the long ago. Moreover, I am now growing old, and cannot live fourteen more years. Nor have I the strength and courage to fight my way up again."

When the story was told the Secretary laid his hand on the shoulder of the suffering clerk, and said, "In a singular way I will protect you. Now be brave, and do as I direct. I can refuse to discharge you; but there will come a time when I am no longer here; and there will be a Secretary who is too busy and too indifferent to listen to the story of any clerk; particularly of a clerk who has such a stigma upon him; so that you will ultimately be discharged, if you remain here."

"Now, my friend, you go to your desk and write out your resignation, to take effect at the close of this month. I will approve of that resignation and give you leave of absence with pay until the end of December. I will await your return."

The clerk did as directed, and when his resignation had been acted upon officially and sent to the Adjutant General, the Secretary said:

"There is work for you to do outside of Government office. You shall have employment. You are sober and a good worker, one whose record here shows that you are always willing to do your full duty and more. I am going to find employment for you. You go home and tell your wife and children that you have resigned by my request, and that after you and all of the family have had a glad Christmas you are to come to me, and I will have something for you."

With tears and fears all banished, the clerk departed. There was a cheery, happy Christmas for him and his family.

Two or three days after Christmas Day he called on the Secretary, who said to him:

"In this envelope you will find railroad tickets for yourself and your family, from Washington to St. Paul, Minnesota, also a letter of introduction to a gentleman in that city with whom I have secured employment for you. He does not know your story, and nobody need ever know it. He needs just such a man as you are. The salary will be two hundred dollars a year more than you have been receiving here. Be good, and be happy."

By diligent attention to business the former clerk rose in the business world to positions of trust. When he recently died he left for his family a comfortable living.

AT THAT

TO illustrate that the word "that" could properly appear in a sentence six consecutive times and still make correct English, this instance is related.

A boy wrote on the blackboard, "The man that lies does wrong."

The teacher objecting to the word "that," the word "who" was substituted. After school one of the older scholars slyly wrote this sentence underneath the first:

"And yet it must appear to the reader for all that, that that 'that' that that teacher objected to was all right, at that."

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